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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7377th meeting
Friday, 6 February 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Liu Jieyi	(China)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Mrs. Jakubonė
	Malaysia	Mr. Haniff
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Nigeria	Mr. Sarki
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Tatham
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2015/74)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2015/74)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Zarif, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Pristina.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hashim Thaçi to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/74, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Farid Zarif.

Mr. Zarif: This Council meets today at a key juncture in Kosovo's history. Last December, after a prolonged political impasse, a new Government was established in Kosovo as a result of an alliance between the Democratic Party of Kosovo and the Democratic League of Kosovo. The new Government, led by Prime Minister Isa Mustafa, declared its commitment to economic reforms, strengthening the rule of law, European and Euro-Atlantic integration and a continued dialogue with Belgrade.

Over the past weeks, however, the Government had to focus on responding to public protests in Pristina on 24 and 27 January involving up to 7,000 people, which turned violent and caused injuries and destruction of public and private property. The protests were largely organized by the opposition movement called Vetëvendosje!, or Self-Determination!, to demand the dismissal of a Kosovo Serb Minister for Communities and Returns for the controversial remarks attributed to him in reaction to the protests in Gjakovë/Đakovica against visiting Serbian internally displaced persons on the occasion of the Orthodox New Year, on 6 January. The protesters in Pristina also demanded the reversal of the Government's decision to withdraw a draft law concerning the transformation of one of the largest industrial entities, Trepça Mines, into a publicly owned enterprise. In addition, the protests appear to have been fuelled by a lingering wider public discontent with the economic situation and a drastic increase in the migration of people out of Kosovo in recent months. The 27 January protest was particularly violent and resulted in over 50 protesters and 100 police officers seeking medical assistance. Some 160 persons were arrested and most of them subsequently released, including the mayor of Pristina, a leader of the Self-Determination! movement.

While peaceful protest is an essential right, the criminal violence and vandalism that accompanied the protests on 24 and 27 January are deplorable. Employing such methods in the guise of pressing for any particular political change or agenda is nothing less than a backward-looking choice — backwards from the voters' aspirations expressed in the elections of June 2014, which were organized throughout Kosovo under a single legal framework.

I commend the prompt and unequivocal public condemnation of those acts by responsible political and civil society leaders in Kosovo. In that context, I wish to acknowledge the decision of some political parties, unions and civil society organizations to publicly distance themselves from the violent acts that took place during the demonstrations. Unfortunately, however, a small number of other political figures, mostly from the opposition, attempted to exploit the situation and deflect their own responsibility for what happened. While the Kosovo police had to resort to the use of tear gas and water cannons, its response was professional and proportional in the face of determined attempts by some elements among the protesters to assault the main public Government buildings, including by throwing

stones and petrol bombs at the buildings and those protecting them.

In that context, I appreciate the efforts made by leaders both in Pristina and Belgrade to restrain political acrimony surrounding the highly complex matter related to the future of the Trepça mining enterprise. I hope that a similarly measured approach will be adopted by all sides with regard to the dismissal of the Kosovo Serb Minister for Communities and Returns on 3 February. The new Government's stated objectives and resolve to undertake the serious work required at this critical juncture should not be undermined by such short-term challenges.

Despite those developments in Pristina, leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina are determined to continue with their high-level dialogue, which will be resumed next Monday, 9 February, in Brussels. In fact, those who initiated and initialled the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations in April 2013, Mr. Dačić and Mr. Thaçi, are in the Council Chamber today. I urge both of them to continue to be active supporters of the full implementation of the agreed provisions and of the further tough core decisions that are required for a comprehensive normalization of relations.

From its inception, the dialogue facilitated by the European Union has been about making hard choices — between the past and the future, between stagnation and progress and between consolidating political power and doing what is in the best interest of all people in the region. The meeting on 9 February presents an opportunity to reaffirm the commitment to a constructive and purposeful dialogue, with a view to shaping a better future for all affected communities in the region. I welcome therefore renewed statements of determination by both Belgrade and Pristina to resolve outstanding differences concerning the implementation of the existing agreements. In that context, I wish to highlight the need for the Kosovo Government's early commitment to the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities during the coming period. That is one of the core provisions of the April 2013 Agreement. I also hope that the relations between Belgrade and Pristina will delve into new important areas as the next round of the dialogue unfolds.

Both the new Kosovo Assembly and the new coalition Government in Pristina have made sensible choices in their priorities, and appear to be acting apace. The formation by the Government of a technical team tasked with preparing the necessary legislation for the establishment of the specialist court is critical. I add my own voice to those of many others in the international community who have urged the Assembly and the Government to move swiftly to complete all the required steps, given the fundamental importance of this issue to justice and reconciliation in Kosovo. The new Government has taken early and prudent steps on some other immediate priorities, such as planning viable economic development and enhancing the rule of law. Both are essential to creating new and equal opportunities for all, and to building confidence in public institutions to promote good governance and protect the rights of all.

I also applaud the swift action taken by the Kosovo Assembly in considering a draft law criminalizing participation in armed conflicts outside Kosovo. I urge further consideration of the draft, in consultation with concerned representatives of the international community. Kosovo's security institutions have already taken active steps by arresting dozens of terror suspects and confiscating weapons and ammunition, and this legislation will help provide a more tailored legal framework for handling the problem in the future. As ever, however, it should be recognized that law enforcement measures alone are not sufficient to address the phenomenon in question. The continuous engagement of political and religious community leaders is vital to deterring youngsters from being lured into violent extremist movements. I note with appreciation that such work is already ongoing.

I welcome the Government's commitment to addressing the root causes of social inequality and high unemployment in Kosovo, but am also alarmed at the growing numbers of irregular, illegal migrants to Western Europe. Many of the issues I have highlighted here trace their roots to a widely perceived dearth of economic and social prospects, especially among Kosovo's young people. In this respect, I note the steps taken by the Kosovo authorities in recent days, including the establishment of an executive commission to carry out an analysis of unpaid debts and review the possibility of debt forgiveness. These steps include a Kosovo Assembly resolution proposing, inter alia, the creation of a special fund for preventing irregular migration, as well as President Jahjaga and Prime Minister Mustafa's initiative to engage both the Government and international stakeholders in a broader discussion of this troubling issue. I urge the Pristina

authorities to proceed judiciously in these matters and to continue to avail themselves of the many sources of advice the international community can offer.

Notable progress has been made since my last briefing (see S/PV.7327) in respect of the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. The Council for the Protection of the Village of Hoçë e Madhe/Velika Hoča was established on 30 January, some two years after the law mandating its creation came into force. Incidents of thefts and vandalism affecting religious sites across Kosovo remain too frequent and demonstrate the need for continuous efforts on the part of the authorities to promote public awareness and appreciation of the value of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of all people in Kosovo. While authorities have made efforts to react to and prevent illegal construction within special protective zones, in particular around the Visoki Dečani monastery, the sensitivity of this matter and its possible impact on intercommunity relations should warrant even swifter action by officials. Incidents between visitors to Serbian Orthodox sites and local demonstrators, such as that which took place on 6 January in Gjakovë/Đakovica, need to be addressed through enhanced local dialogue, beyond simple law enforcement measures.

Finally, with regard to progress in the critical process of establishing the fate of missing persons, I urge both sides to muster the political will necessary to bring about a swift closure of the 1,655 outstanding cases, in order to help heal the wounds of the conflict and its aftermath, alleviate the grief and suffering of the families, bring the perpetrators to justice, provide compensation to the affected families, and facilitate reconciliation. In light of all the developments I have discussed today, I trust that leaders at all levels in both Belgrade and Pristina will courageously embrace their responsibility at this critical moment in the historic process of the normalization of relations and will not shy away from making the often trying choices they are likely to face in the dialogue process.

In conclusion, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Council members for their support to the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. We will continue working intensively and constructively with our local and international partners, in accordance with our mandate.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me to express my gratitude for the opportunity to address the Security Council on the occasion of the consideration of the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/74) on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I would like to thank all the members of this organ for their continued attention they accord to the question of Kosovo and Metohija. Drawing upon the constructive cooperation achieved over the 15 years since the establishment of the Interim Administration in Kosovo and Metohija, I am convinced that, through consistent efforts and joint endeavours based on resolution 1244 (1999), we shall arrive at the goal to which we all aspire — the political settlement of the question of Kosovo and Metohija.

I would like to reiterate what I have said on a number of occasions before this body. The presence of the United Nations Mission is of paramount importance to stability in the southern Serbian province and to the creation of conditions leading to a lasting and sustainable settlement to the question of Kosovo and Metohija. Serbia highly appreciates the engagement of UNMIK in creating conditions for peaceful coexistence among the residents of Kosovo and Metohija, the security of all local communities, and respect for their human rights. We also appreciate the contribution of other international organizations — including the Kosovo Force (KFOR), the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission in Kosovo, as well as the specialized agencies of the United Nations — which, through their missions under United Nations auspices, are a part of the international civil and security presences in the province. In particular, we appreciate the efforts made by Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in monitoring the implementation of the UNMIK mandate and coordinating international civil and security presences.

Following the formation of the Government in Pristina, as pointed out in the report before the Council as one of the key political events, Serbia expects that the political vacuum will be filled, which should contribute to the continuation of the implementation of the agreements reached in the Brussels dialogue. We also expect that the continuation of the dialogue at the high level in Brussels on 9 February this year will provide

additional impetus to the process of normalization begun between Belgrade and Pristina.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia is fully committed to the dialogue with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) in Pristina. The essence of the process of the normalization of relations is the finding of right answers to the questions that burden the life of the residents of Kosovo and Metohija and prevent them from realizing their basic rights. That can be achieved only through dialogue, based on a genuine understanding of the needs and interests of the other party, and readiness to compromise. I am pleased to note that, in that context, special mention has been made in the report of the visit of Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić to Kosovo and Metohija on the occasion of the celebration of the Orthodox New Year and of his message of the need for life together and the building of a stable future for the Serbian community with its Albanian neighbours. However, a shadow over the visit was cast by an incident involving a group of Albanians who assaulted the motorcade of the highest Government representatives of the Republic of Serbia, which the report before us makes no mention of.

Serbia approaches the dialogue with Pristina openly, desirous of finding practical solutions that will make it possible for all residents of Kosovo and Metohija to lead normal lives within a broader process of European integration. The participation of the Serbs in the political life of Kosovo and Metohija should contribute in that regard. In that context, I would like to point to the participation of the representatives of the Serbian list in the work of the Pristina Government in ministerial and other positions in its institutions.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has fulfilled conscientiously, consistently and in a timely manner all its obligations emanating from the agreements reached within the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, signed in Brussels on 19 April 2013. I express my satisfaction that the importance of the establishment of the community of Serbian municipalities is noted in the current report and defined as the key question in the direct continuation of the implementation of the Brussels Agreement.

Let me point out that the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), the position of the Serbian Orthodox Church and property issues remain the key questions for the Republic of Serbia in the further dialogue with Pristina.

I take this opportunity to point out that the Government of the Republic of Serbia abides by the other agreement reached earlier on regional representation and cooperation, too. The agreement provides for the scope and manner of the participation of Pristina representatives in regional activities, initiatives and forums. Recently, however, attempts have been made to include the representatives of Pristina in the work of international organizations outside the context of the agreement. Those attempts are unacceptable for Serbia. These questions should be addressed within our dialogue with Pristina.

Serbia welcomes the work of UNMIK in the area of monitoring the status of non-majority communities in Kosovo and Metohija in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other missions present in the province.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia attaches great importance to finding a proper solution for IDPs from Kosovo and Metohija. The creation of real conditions for their return is one of the key factors in the process of reconciliation. Unfortunately, even 15 years after the end of the conflict, there exist no conditions for sustainable IDP returns to Kosovo and Metohija, primarily because of the lack of proper interest in this question by the Provisional Institutions in Pristina. This sad fact is noted also in the regular reports of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK and in the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Let me remind the Council that Serbia tops the list of European countries with the largest number of IDPs. From Kosovo and Metohija, they number almost 230,000. According to UNHCR data, noted also in the report before us, 17,000 of them, mostly Serbs, are in the province itself. Return to Kosovo and Metohija has been realized by fewer than 5 per cent of IDPs. According to UNHCR data, 12,145 persons returned to Kosovo and Metohija from the rest of Serbia. Only 1.9 per cent — about 4 000 persons — have realized a sustainable return. Seventy per cent of the returnees are not ethnic Serbs. The latest UNHCR data, cited in the current report on UNMIK, confirm the continuity of the decreasing trend and confirm that only 149 persons returned from central Serbia to Kosovo and Metohija in the last trimester.

I would like to point out that the experience gained so far from the work of the Kosovo Privatization

Agency shows that the decisions on the right to property restitution are ineffective — that is, they remain words rather than deeds — as Albanians continue to use Serbian property or to re-occupy it upon eviction without consequences, while Serbs are still unable to repossess it.

Physical insecurity, as evinced by the continued attacks on Serbs and their property and helped by the atmosphere of impunity for crimes committed against Serbs, is surely accountable for the long delay in IDP returns. Illustrative examples in that regard are the numerous security incidents that took place as Serbs from Dakovica — who numbered 12, 000 prior to 1999 — attempted to visit their homes and the town cemetery. One incident involved the 6 January stoning of a bus with about 40 displaced Serbs from Dakovica inside. The only Minister in the Kosovo Government who condemned the incident was Aleksandar Jablanović, which resulted in his dismissal. The violence against returnees, the dismissal of Minister Jablanović and violent demonstrations in Pristina create an atmosphere of hatred towards the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as a feeling of distrust and insecurity. Instead of using the constructive approach of Serbia and its call on the Serbian people to take part in the elections and participate in the Government, Pristina has whipped up a climate of political instability and an anti-Serbian campaign, which is contrary to the goals of the Brussels dialogue. That is borne out also by OSCE data, available in the report before us, on over 230 security incidents that took place in returnee localities from August 2012 to 2014.

The presence of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) is therefore necessary given the still unstable situation, and the number of its troops must not be reduced further. I expect KFOR to continue its engagement in accordance with its current mandate and within its competencies provided for both by the military-technical agreement and resolution 1244 (1999).

In that context, I would like to draw the Council's attention as well to the legal insecurity evinced by a systematic obstruction of the property rights of Serbs, especially displaced Serbs, and the political obstruction of the process of integration of the judiciary organs in northern Kosovo and Metohija, as provided for by the Brussels Agreement.

Serbia considers it its obligation to seek a solution so that conditions could be created for a normal life for all people who did not leave their homes of their own will. Concerned over the slow progress in voluntary returns to Kosovo and Metohija and desirous of intensifying the efforts in this area, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has initiated the establishment of a new consultative body, incorporating the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, as well as the Kosovo Minister for Communities and Returns. The creation of conditions for the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations to enjoy the basic human rights and the rights belonging to them as non-majority populations in Kosovo and Metohija would certainly help improve the general atmosphere for IDP returns.

We condemn each and every desecration of religious sites, of whichever faith. In that sense, I would like to point out that the messages related to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant "future Caliphate", to the Kosovo Liberation Army and to the Albanian National Army in the graffiti scribbled on the walls of Visoki Dečani, the Serbian Orthodox monastery founded in the fourteenth century and included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, continue to be disconcerting. The reason for our deep concern in that regard is not the mere desecration of a cultural heritage site of world renown, but that it is being desecrated by scribbling messages that glorify terrorists at a time when the international community is making enormous efforts in combating that evil — the biggest threat to international peace and security.

It is with concern that I bring to the Council's attention the continued desecration of Serbian monasteries. In the night of 4 and 5 December 2014, "UÇK" and "Kosovo" graffiti were scribbled on the walls in the churchyard of the Saint Kosma and Damian Church, despite the security provided by the Kosovo Police forces. Let me point out that those acts are not only a threat and an insult addressed to the Serbian Orthodox Church and its clergy, but also a way to intimidate the remaining Orthodox population in Kosovo and Metohija, most of it consisting of Serbs. I take this opportunity to point to the need to introduce additional measures to protect the Serbian cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo and Metohija.

The attacks on these sites are, at the same time, attacks on the identity of Serbs and directly influence their feeling of security and acceptance. The renewed scribbling of graffiti on an endangered cultural site on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites brings into question the commitment of the relevant authorities in the province to protecting and preserving Serbian cultural and religious heritage. At the same time, we

have been witness to the unfolding of a parallel process of altering historical facts, aimed at marginalizing and eliminating the presence of Serbs and Serbia from the history of Kosovo and Metohija.

Moreover, let me point out that the need for increased security has recently assumed an additional dimension related to the fight against terrorist threats originating from the worldwide rise of violent extremism. As a sponsor of resoltuion 2178 (2014), the Republic of Serbia has taken all the necessary measures to suppress the financing and organizing of terrorism and the increasing phenomenon of recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters who join armed terrorist organizations in the Middle East, such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Serbia will continue to act resolutely on the suppression of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We expect the international missions in Kosovo and Metohija and PISG to make their own contributions, within their capacities, to this common fight of ours, which is of global significance.

In the context of the priority that the Government of the Republic of Serbia attaches to resolving property issues in Kosovo and Metohija, I would like to draw the Council's attention to the privatization processes carried out by the Kosovo Privatization Agency, which are contrary to international and European human rights conventions. In addition, UNMIK has determined that the process was contrary to resolution 1244 (1999), as the Kosovo Privatization Agency was not established under the laws in force in Kosovo and Metohija in accordance with the resolution.

Particularly evident is the tendency to privatize public and socially owned companies in the Serbian majority communities. Such companies are being sold to persons of Albanian nationality. I would like to point out that the nationality of the persons who come into possession of the companies is not in dispute; what is in dispute is that the actions involved are unlawful and motivated by the destruction of the economic resources in the Serbian communities. I would like to take this opportunity to raise the ongoing property issue of the Trepça combine: any other solution to this question that differs from the one achieved in the Brussels Agreement would be unacceptable to the Republic of Serbia.

Of particular concern is the attempt of the Pristina Government to adopt, without consultations with the representatives of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija, the law on the amendments of the law on public enterprises. In doing so, it is in breach of article 2 of the coalition agreement on the basis of which the current Government was formed in Pristina. That article provides for halting further privatization in the Serbian communities and an agreement that property issues be discussed in Brussels with the mediation of the European Council and the European Commission. I am convinced that we are all aware of the importance of respect for ownership rights regardless of whether private or public property is involved. In this sense, it is necessary to ensure that all activities in Kosovo and Metohija related to privatization once again take place in the legally valid framework. That is all the more relevant since activities in this area in the southern Serbian province necessarily have an ethnic connotation, which is inadmissible in a democratic world.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of continued monitoring and assessment of the work of the judiciary and other PISG organs in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as an appraisal of their readiness to take over the executive competencies that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) now has responsibility for, as provided by the decision on the extension of the mandate and reconfiguration of EULEX taken in June 2014. On a number of occasions, Serbia has pointed out the need for continued monitoring and defining of proper criteria for the appraisal of the work of the Institutions by the relevant missions present in Kosovo and Metohija under the auspices of the United Nations. It is with regret that we note that the current situation in Kosovo and Metohija reflects, in part, the lack of adequate professional capacities on the part of the PISG.

In its *Kosovo Progress Report 2014*, the European Commission expresses serious concerns regarding the independence, accountability and impartiality of the justice system in Kosovo and Metohija. The report also points to the need for more concrete results in the fight against organized crime, corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing. In reporting on the work of first-instance courts in its *Justice Monitor* report for the first half of 2014, OSCE points to shortcomings such as poor or no translation provided in cases involving members of non-majority communities, as well as to the fact that more than half of the decisions have not been fully reasoned.

The chaotic situation in the justice system of Kosovo and Metohija is borne out also by the trial of the former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army charged with

the commission of war crimes in the detention centre in the locality of Kleçka. Additional suspicion about the impartiality of the Kosovo and Metohija justice system is raised by the case of Oliver Ivanović, a political leader of the Serbs who remained in custody for a year before his trial began.

The current situation in Kosovo and Metohija bears out our assessment that conditions have not yet been fulfilled, under resolution 1244 (1999), for a full transfer of competencies to the PISG. That these functions have been entrusted to EULEX does not diminish the powers and responsibility of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I expect that, within its mandate, EULEX will continue to carry out its executive competencies in the area of the rule of law, in view of the real assessment of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija in that regard.

I take this opportunity to commend the efforts made in the investigation of the allegations contained in the report of Senator Dick Marty on the inhuman treatment of people in the illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo and Metohija. I welcome the reference in the report before us on the need to urgently establish the specialist court to try cases arising from the finding of the European Union Special Investigative Task Force.

Serbia is committed to the process of reconciliation. We consider that an important way to confront our own past and, in that context, to establish the fate of missing persons. This is important, first and foremost because of the families of these persons and as a contribution to the process of inter-ethnic reconciliation in the province. To that end, our expert teams cooperate with UNMIK and EULEX, as well as with the competent bodies in Kosovo and Metohija.

The process of inter-ethnic reconciliation is incomplete without the trial of the former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army responsible for the persecution of Serbs, Roma and other non-Albanians, as well as their political opponents among Kosovo and Metohija Albanians. We expect that necessary conditions will be created to try former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army who are suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In conclusion, let me point out once again that the quest for a lasting and sustainable peace in Kosovo and Metohija is the national priority of Serbia. We can arrive at the solution only through negotiations and dialogue with the PISG in Pristina, fully respecting the legitimate interests of the Albanian, Serbian and other populations in Kosovo and Metohija on the basis of resolution 1244 (1999). The solution to the question of Kosovo and Metohija must be in the interests of our citizens, who should be enabled to live in normal conditions, while a safe life together for all communities should be made possible. In arriving at a solution, we must achieve mutual reconciliation.

That will process will certaily be helped by the adoption of European standards and values as the entire region moves towards the European Union. We believe that the commitment to European integration is the principal driving force behind the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. We expect the European Union to continue its active engagement in, and facilitate our dialogue, with Pristina.

I would like to address a call from this Chamber to the political leaders in the province to invest efforts — now that conditions have been created by the ending of the stalemate of the political process in Pristina — to continue the dialogue, primarily in the interests of the population of Kosovo and Metohija. The Government of the Republic of Serbia will certainly maintain its active engagement in the implementation of the Brussels Agreement in the interests of peace and economic progress and reconciliation.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Thaçi.

Mr. Thaçi (*interpretation from Albanian; English text provided by delegation*): Let me first express my gratitude for this opportunity to address the Council at its first meeting this year on Kosovo. Today, I will inform the Council about the progress Kosovo has achieved in recent months and of the commitments of the new Government of Kosovo.

This month marks the seventh anniversary of Kosovo's declaration of independence, the most important act in the people of Kosovo's commitment to freedom and democracy. I can say with pride that the seventh anniversary of independence finds Kosovo as a consolidated State, inside and out. The recognition accorded to my country has shown that the State of Kosovo is an irreversible reality and an indispensable factor of peace and stability in the region. Kosovo has been recognized by all neighbouring countries, with the exception of Serbia, and the vast majority of countries of the region and the Euro-Atlantic community. The Republic of Kosovo has been recognized by 108 countries on all continents. I call upon all States

Members of the United Nations, including members of the Council, to recognize Kosovo and to take the step of joining in the support of Kosovo as an equal and full member of the international community.

Recently, Kosovo became a member of the International Organization of La Francophonie. In December, Kosovo became a member of the International Olympic Committee. Kosovo was granted full membership, ending its international isolation. Our athletes will now have the opportunity to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

Kosovo has achieved concrete results in its goal of strengthening regional cooperation. The new State has become a member of all relevant regional organizations. In accordance with our policy of strengthening regional cooperation, at the beginning of my tenure I visited Albania, Montenegro and Macedonia to promote good-neighbourly relations and to ensure our mutual commitment to the European future of the region. In late March, Kosovo will host the six Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Balkans, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, at a summit in Kosovo. We plan to discuss joint investment opportunities and projects.

We are also continuing to implement the agreements reached in the process of normalizing our relations with Serbia. The process of integrating the four municipalities of northern Kosovo into Kosovo's institutions is now successfully under way. The representatives of citizens who live in the north of the country are now part of the new Government of Kosovo, and they hold ministerial positions. Although dialogue at the political level has been postponed due to the formation of new Governments, first in Serbia and then in Kosovo, the dialogue on technical issues has continued. During this time, we have achieved satisfactory progress in closing the parallel structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia in the northern part of our country, while Serbian personnel have been fully integrated into the Kosovo police. We have come to agreements on the implementation of integrated border management and on energy and telecom issues. Finally, we have enabled the collection of custom revenues at border crossings in the northern part of the country.

I must express concern over tendencies on the Serbian side to avoid or delay the implementation of the Brussels Agreement, which indicates that Serbia has not given up its interference in the internal affairs of Kosovo. The report *Dossier: Rudnica*, published last week by the internationally respected Serbian Humanitarian Law Centre, is a very disturbing account. It accuses the current Chief of the Serbian Army of having committed atrocities in Kosovo in 1999 and of hiding in mass graves the bodies of Kosovar civilians killed in Serbia. According to the report, Serbia has never initiated or brought charges against any of the hundreds of officers and police officers implicated in the atrocities. I invite the Serbian leadership to find the strength to deal with the past, and call on the Security Council to request that Serbia heed the report's findings with due gravity.

Earlier this year, we saw an increase in the establishment of Serbian parallel structures, such as the appointment of parallel municipal mayors, including in the municipality of Štrpce, the creation of parallel posts in the Dragaš and Prizren municipalities. We have noted the obstacles faced by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and local police in establishing the rule of law and normality in the four northern municipalities, caused by illegal mayors and paramilitary and criminal groups that have hampered the progress of the Serb community in Kosovo during the past 15 years. We have informed the European Union of all such developments, and demanded that Serbia respect the Brussels Agreement in full. I call on the Security Council today to demand that Serbia honour the agreements reached.

The State of Kosovo has shown maturity in consolidating its domestic affairs. One example of that is the political maturity shown by all political actors during the months in which we negotiated the formation of the new Government, following the general elections. Throughout that period, the political parties have shown respect for the laws and institutions of Kosovo. At the same time, the independent institutions, such as the presidency and the Constitutional Court, have shown integrity and professionalism. All that has led to a political agreement that has paved the way for the creation of the new Assembly and the formation of the new Government. The new Government is a comprehensive one in which all communities are represented, including Kosovo Serb citizens who live in the northern part of the country.

This week, Prime Minister Isa Mustafa dismissed a member of the Government who represented the Serb community. He was removed not because of his affiliation, but because he did not show professionalism in undertaking the tasks expected of a representative of

the Government. That incident was used by Serbia to politically attack Kosovo, but Kosovo is an independent country and takes its own decisions independently.

Serbia also attacked Kosovo with respect to the Trepča Mines complex and Serbia's claim to this industrial giant. It should be noted once again that Trepča is the property of Kosovo and Kosovo's responsibility. The solution to the issue was delayed because the Interim Administration in Kosovo was not ready to face the political pressure that the Trepča incident would bring. The institutions of Kosovo have affirmed that Trepča requires a solution in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and with the principle of the privatization of socially owned enterprises in Kosovo that had begun with the United Nations Administration and with the consent of the United Nation Office of Legal Affairs. Trepča is Kosovo's and Kosovo decides on Trepča.

The crucial evidence of Kosovo's success is its completion of negotiations in the stabilization and association process with the European Union (EU). This is recognition of the substantial progress that Kosovo has made in the fields of its economy, democracy and the rule of law.

I would also like to inform the Council of the main priorities of the new Government of the Republic of Kosovo. Together with the new Government's partners, we have created a realistic and ambitious Government programme for the next four years. We are committed to a dynamic executive and legislative agenda that should move the country towards NATO and EU membership. We are committed to economic development as our main focus for the next four years, starting with a series of concrete steps to improve the economic situation and continue the positive trend of economic growth.

At the international level, I want to reiterate that the Government of Kosovo will remain strongly committed to the full normalization of inter-State relations with Serbia and to continue dialogue that will be finalized with mutual recognition. Only that step will enable the building of sustainable peace between the two countries and the establishment of diplomatic and good-neighbourly relations in the European spirit. The commitment will be confirmed in three days, on 9 February, when the first meeting of the new Prime Ministers of the two countries will take place under the auspices of the EU High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms. Mogherini.

Kosovo, as part of the Western Balkans and the Euro-Atlantic region, will also continue the process of integration into the European Union as a priority for its social transformation and economic and political development. During its term in office, the Government is committed to concluding the signing of the EU stabilization and association agreement in the first half of 2015 and to begin the implementation of the agreement. The stabilization and association agreement is a contractual relationship between the EU and Kosovo, which will serve to Europeanize our national policies and modernize the country.

Another issue to be addressed is that of the unfair and perennial isolation of Kosovar citizens, who are the only people in Europe that do not have the right to freedom of movement in the Schengen Area. In this respect, a key priority is the implementation of the action plan addressing all the challenges of repatriation, reintegration, document security, border and migration management and overall security and public order. Many Kosovars today are fleeing Kosovo due to the inability to legally migrate to EU countries. Kosovo has been isolated for too long and our young people want have freedom of movement within our continent by any means necessary.

The Republic of Kosovo has consistently shown that it is a responsible actor in terms of its international obligations. In the early days of the formation of the Government, we showed our commitment by finalizing the draft law that prohibits the citizens of Kosovo from taking part in armed conflicts outside the country. Although it is small, our country has shown that it is a partner and ally in the global war against terrorism. We naturally aligned ourselves with the global coalition, led by the United States of America, against the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, and we will remain active until we have achieved the annihilation of this phenomenon, which has not only hurt the Middle East, but affected European capitals as well. The uncertain world of violence that these terrorists are proclaiming is not a world that we can accept. Therefore, the Republic of Kosovo is on the front lines to eradicate this phenomenon. We know very well what it means to live with terror in a state of systematic violence.

Kosovo this year will also apply to be a full member of the Council of Europe. Today, Kosovars are the only citizens in Europe who cannot seek protection from the European Court of Human Rights. It is going to be a key priority for me to put an end to this exclusion.

Kosovo's goal is to be a place that contributes to collective security, and we are tirelessly committed to strengthening the peace and security architecture in the region and beyond. In this regard, we have undertaken a strategic review of the security sector in Kosovo and are now making coordinated preparations for the transition from the Kosovo Security Force to the Armed Forces of Kosovo. I want to thank the NATO liaison and advising team, which has been very close to us throughout this process. I want to assure the Council that the Kosovo Armed Forces will be a professional and multi-ethnic force, guided by the principles of democratic and civilian control, and will gradually integrate into the Euro-Atlantic framework and be ready to contribute to regional peace and global security.

I would like to inform the Council that Kosovo intends to start a new chapter of cooperation with NATO, moving towards the Partnership for Peace as the main instrument for full membership, through a gradual approach and coordination with our Euro-Atlantic partners.

Let me reiterate that, during the past seven years, the Republic of Kosovo, thanks to the will and commitment of its people, as well as the political leadership and support of the international community, has built stable and durable multi-ethnic and democratic institutions. As a result, Kosovo has become a source of peace and an exporter of stability in the region and beyond. Let me remind the Council once again that Kosovo is one of the most successful State-building endeavours in the United Nations history.

The objectives of resolution 1244 (1999) have been met for quite some time now, and it is time for a new chapter in the relations between Kosovo and the United Nations. Kosovo is forever grateful for the role and contribution of the United Nations in our country's State-building process. However, considering the course of developments since the declaration of independence, the role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has been significantly minimized and it now has only a reporting role.

Bearing this in mind and praising Kosovo's achievements in the field of security, economic stability and social and political development, as well as highlighting the agreement reached between Kosovo and Serbia, it is time that the Security Council consider the possibility of a transformation of UNMIK that would help Kosovo align itself with the specialized agencies. We also ask the Security Council to help the Republic of Kosovo in the realization of its aspirations of joining the United Nations as a member with full rights and responsibilities.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Mangaral (Chad) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, for his statement. I would also like to welcome and thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, for their statements.

Six months after the holding of parliamentary elections on 8 June 2014, Chad is pleased to note the signing of a coalition agreement between the principal political parties in Kosovo, which allowed the formation of a new Government in Pristina and the establishment of the Assembly of Kosovo. This new momentum will make it possible to overcome the State's paralysis and address the fundamental issues with regard to Kosovo's management and administration.

We welcome the adoption by the Assembly of Kosovo of the law on the Kosovo budget for 2015. Moreover, we note that the municipal budgets in northern Kosovo are also finalized, but are encountering difficulties in terms of taking into account the salaries for health and education personnel. In that regard, we urge the new authorities to promptly reach a solution to this situation.

With regard to security, in particular the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into the Armed Forces of Kosovo, Chad believes that the new authorities need to find the appropriate space to facilitate the conditions to resolve this issue, while respecting Kosovo's general interests, territorial integrity and sovereignty. We also welcome the new Government's commitment to fighting violent extremism and terrorism through the adoption by the Kosovo Assembly Committee on Internal Affairs of the draft law on the prohibition of joining armed conflicts outside State territory. These efforts and developments are moving forward, as can be seen beyond the national territory. We commend the joint efforts undertaken by the authorities of Belgrade in the process of normalizing the relationship between the two countries.

The constructive technical exchanges in the areas of law, energy and migration, and the recent visits of the Serbian President to Pristina and northern Kosovo, demonstrate the desire to overcome the difficulties in seeking peace and stability in the framework facilitated by the European Union. These political and technical gains will remain tenuous as long as the economic and social situations are not brought under control and stabilized.

According to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/74), a number of situations and challenges call for particular attention and firm commitment if we want to bring about lasting solutions to Kosovo's problems. These include, inter alia, the growing number of demonstrations in different regions of Kosovo, which have led to many arrests and discontent. The most recent one was on 24 and 25 January. There are 1,655 cases of disappeared persons and the relevant authorities must address that situation. The establishment of a specialist court to continue the work in the area of war crimes and crimes against humanity is needed. There were more than 17,000 internally displaced persons at the end of 2014 and the number of voluntary returns had declined, according to the information provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The movement of illegal migrants increasingly towards Western Europe is a problem.

With regard to the process of disarming the civilian population, the efforts of the local authorities, with the support of United Nations Development Programme, have made it possible to withdraw from circulation more than 1,500 firearms in 2014. The number of incidents affecting religious sites and places of worship has led to the establishment of a monitoring Committee, including all the churches and other denominations, to provide an institutional and collective response to hate speech and graffiti. Lastly, efforts to bring about greater participation of women in political spheres and to strengthen measures for their protection are key.

Chad believes that the democratic process has been launched in Kosovo and that taking into account all the variables will guarantee the building of a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo. Kosovo will not achieve this new phase without the contribution and persistent and serious work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, and his entire team for their commitment to carrying out their mission.

Concerning the accusations of corruption on the part of certain members of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), Chad urges the relevant bodies to investigate them in order to establish responsibility. We have renewed confidence in EULEX, which we believe can continue to oversee the situation and play a role in the area of the rule of law.

In conclusion, we would like to once again commend Pristina for the positive developments concerning national reconciliation and normalization of relations with Belgrade, and to congratulate UNMIK on its commitment to promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia. We share the views and concerns he expressed. We have taken note of Mr. Thaçi's statement, and we thank Mr. Zarif for his presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/74) on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and his assessment of the situation in the region.

As a result of the internal political crisis in Kosovo that lasted until the end of 2014 — owing to the key parties' inability to form new power structures independently and without outside involvement after the elections to the Assembly of Kosovo, held ahead of schedule on 8 June — the settlement of many pressing issues, both in the region and in the relations between Belgrade and Pristina, has come to a standstill. The situation has once again shown that the facade of Kosovo's political institutions conceals serious problems.

The formation of a coalition ministerial Cabinet that includes representatives of the Serbian community has helped to normalize the situation somewhat. However, on 25 and 27 January the Kosovo Albanian opposition, mainly nationalists, organized anti-Government demonstrations in Pristina that escalated into serious riots and clashes with police and produced dozens of casualties. As a result, political stability has again come under threat. Under pressure from the demonstrators, the Kosovo authorities forced the Minister for Communities and Returns, Aleksandar Jablanović, an ethnic Serb, to resign. In that regard, we support Serbia's to reach a political solution to the Kosovo problem. In the current circumstances, establishing a

mutually respectful dialogue between the parties is one task that cannot be put off. We want to emphasize that unilateral action is unacceptable, and the fomenting of anti-Serb sentiment in Kosovo must end immediately.

We are on the Serbian side regarding the issue of the importance of creating a specialist court to prosecute the egregious crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army during the years of armed conflict. The interim results released by the investigation speak unambiguously to the adequacy of the evidence that has been collected in support of the allegations of multiple murders, kidnappings, rape, unlawful detention, inhumane treatment, trafficking in human organs and desecration of churches. It was such actions that led to the mass exodus of Serbs from southern and central Kosovo, where ethnic cleansing did indeed take place. We call on the Secretary-General to closely monitor the situation concerning the creation of the specialist court and to facilitate completion of the process as soon as possible. It is strange that the establishment of such a body should depend on the enactment of legislative decisions in Pristina, particularly considering the evident weakness of Kosovo's political institutions. Nonetheless, we hope that real progress will be made in that direction in the near future, and that in the end the guilty parties will be punished regardless of the position they occupy. It is vital that all witnesses be duly protected during the course of the trials.

A number of years have passed during which Kosovo has still not seen progress in the areas of justice and the fight against corruption and organized crime, including drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings, as well as freedom of speech and limiting political influence on the judicial system. Recent reports of the European Commission and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe testify to this. Regression in other areas, including the social and economic fields, is clearly apparent. Unemployment is very high, and people are leaving Kosovo en masse in search of a better life.

Inter-ethnic tensions remain acute, yet we see no concrete steps being taken to bring those responsible for anti-Serb actions to justice. The ongoing desecration of Orthodox monasteries in the region, including the Visoki Dečani monastery, a jewel of the world's cultural heritage, is seriously disturbing. On 6 January, the eve of Orthodox Christmas, a bus carrying Serbian pilgrims, refugees from the town of Gjakovë/Đakovica who were trying to visit a church there, was stoned. Clearly, in such circumstances Serbs from Gjakovë/Đakovica cannot expect to return to their homes they abandoned there. Indeed, as the data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees shows, the already weak rates of refugee return are falling, while the outflow of representatives of national minorities is growing. The mere existence of legislation guaranteeing their rights is therefore not enough; it must be strictly monitored.

We note Belgrade's constructive attitude and its continued readiness to maintain contacts with Kosovo Albanian representatives. We believe that the planned resumption of a high-level political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina in the next few days will enable progress to be made on key issues on the agenda concerning the creation of the association of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo. The fact that the agreement on this, reached way back in April 2013, has gone unrealized has had a negative effect on interaction between the ethnic communities in the region.

Kosovars' participation in conflicts in the Middle East, including in the ranks of Islamic State and other radical organizations, should continue to be firmly suppressed. We call on Pristina to be more active in countering the spread of extremist ideas and the fomenting of terrorism, using its recently passed legislation. We assume that the issue will continue to be a focus of attention for UNMIK.

The United Nations Mission is still the chief international presence in Kosovo. The European Union's mediation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and the transfer of UNMIK's rule-of-law functions to the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo do not imply a reduction of the role of the United Nations in the region. Considering the wide range of problems that exists, we call on the United Nations Mission to fulfil its mandate fully, in principle and proactively. In order to that it must clearly be in possession of all the necessary resources and personnel. We categorically reject any attempts to devalue UNMIK's role and call on the Kosovo Albanian side to cooperate fully with the United Nations presence.

Russia's position on the question of Kosovo and Serbia's territorial integrity is unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) retains its full force and remains essential to the entire international legal basis for the settlement in Kosovo. In that regard, we do not support any proposals that in any way modify the review cycle for

settling the Kosovo issue in the Security Council. The prerequisites for that are not ready yet.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing.

Spain considers the role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), in accordance with its mandate as established by resolution 1244 (1999), to be very important. UNMIK makes a crucial contribution to promoting and preserving stability in the region and acting as a link between the various international presences on the ground. That is clearly expressed in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/74), which emphasizes UNMIK's active role and the important part it plays in preventing and reducing tensions and in promoting cooperation among local authorities, particularly North and South Mitrovica. For that reason I would like to reaffirm Spain's support for UNMIK and Mr. Zarif. I would also like to express our appreciation for the statements made by Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and by Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

After a long hiatus, a new high-level meeting on the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the High Representative of the European Union, is scheduled to take place, and that is clearly good news. Spain offers its constructive support, without prejudice to our principled position, for the High Representative's efforts to foster that direct dialogue in order to produce concrete results that benefit the whole population. I wish to acknowledge in that regard the commitment that the authorities in Belgrade and Pristina have shown thus far, as well as the openness and constructiveness of their participation in the dialogue. We encourage both parties to continue to participate in the process with the same positive attitude.

Spain welcomes the agreements reached throughout the process, but also believes that it is essential that dialogue continue with political commitment and work at the technical level in order to move ahead in the implementation of the still pending provisions of the 19 April 2013 Agreement. It is important to make quick and decisive progress on three fronts: in the justice sector, property rights and the full establishment and entry into functioning of the association/community of Serb municipalities pursuant to the Agreement.

In another vein, in the area of security, we listened closely to Special Representative of the Secretary General Zarif's briefing, which brought us up to date specifically on the recent violent episodes and protests, which were also alluded to in the Secretary-General's report. Unfortunately, we cannot yet speak of total reconciliation or a satisfactory integration among the different constituent communities, which is seen, for example, in the persistent incidents involving religious sites, the ongoing decrease in the number of voluntary returnees and the absence of conditions needed to adequately reintegrate returnees in their communities. There is also an ongoing contrast between legislation that has made nominal progress in the area of human rights and the rights of minorities and, at the same time, a practical application thereof, which is not yet at the level of international and European standards.

I wish to also highlight the work performed by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. The Security Council acknowledges that work and appreciates it. Economic governance issues and rule-of-law issues are two areas where reforms are needed as a matter of priority.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Spain's commitment to the European perspective for the Western Balkans. We believe that progress made towards this shared objective will allow for the definitive stabilization of the region and the economic and social progress for its inhabitants. That necessarily requires, however, a high level of political commitment and concrete work from all stakeholders, each in their areas of responsibility.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2015/74). We welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and thank him for his statement. We also welcome Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

Angola's position is that resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be the applicable legal framework for reaching a comprehensive solution for Kosovo through dialogue and negotiations on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions. We therefore support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and understand the legitimate concerns of that country on the Kosovo issue.

We would like to underline the fundamental role played by the United Nations in Kosovo through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, and its cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo.

I shall now focus on four main issues: the key political developments, human rights, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and missing persons.

On key political developments, the European Union-facilitated dialogue at a high-level of leadership between Belgrade and Pristina appears to be crucial for moving forward in the implementation of the outstanding provisions of the 19 April 2013 Agreement. In that regard, we commend the Government of Serbia for its readiness to engage in the dialogue. Some progress has been achieved at the technical level in setting arrangements for the travel of Serbian and Kosovo officials. However, additional progress is expected once political talks resume at a higher political level in the implementation of agreements on the judiciary, energy, crossing points and the freedom of movement. We share Belgrade's concern over the announced intention of the Kosovo authorities to transform the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo Armed Forces in violation of resolution 1244 (1999).

With respect to human rights, we welcome the organization by UNMIK, supported by UN-Women and the United Nations Development Coordinator, of an "Open Day on Women, Peace and Security in Kosovo", marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the recognition of survivors of sexual violence in the relevant Kosovo legislation. Another relevant idea was the Common Voice Forum a multi-ethnic initiative that brings together representatives from all of Kosovo's communities for the advancement of inter-ethnic dialogue, conflict prevention and civic awareness. However, the full implementation of the legal framework continues to be hindered, as the report underlines, by a range of institutional factors, including inefficient coordination, overlapping mandates, insufficient financial allocations and limited accountability measures.

On internally displaced persons, we regret that by the end of 2014 there were more than 17,000 internally displaced persons in Kosovo and that the number of voluntary returns continues to show a declining trend, with the unresolved issues regarding property and a lack of effective enforcement of the courts' decisions as the key obstacle to the increase of returnees. We recall in that regard the request made by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of the internally displaced persons following its mission to Serbia, including Kosovo, to the competent authorities of Kosovo, especially the provision of protection, security and safety for returning IDPs to their places of origin.

On the issue of missing persons, we commend the responsible authorities in Belgrade and Pristina for their continued efforts to pursue new sources of information and carry out investigations with respect to 1,655 remaining missing persons from 1988 to 2000.

In conclusion, we are encouraged that the overall security situation in Kosovo remained stable during the reporting period, thereby highlighting that UNMIK continued to be active in its facilitation role between communities and officials and with international organizations, particularly focused on efforts aimed at preventing and reducing tensions and promoting cooperation between local authorities.

Finally, we commend the work carried out by UNMIK under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, in the promotion of security, stability, the rule of law and respect for human rights in accordance with the Mission's mandate.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): I thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. My delegation welcomes His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, and thank them both for their statements.

Malaysia joins other countries in welcoming the recent formation of the Government in Kosovo, following the legislative elections in June of last year. After a six-month delay, we applaud the power-sharing agreement between the coalition parties, based on a spirit of compromise and inclusiveness. We commend the key role played by President Atifete Jahjaga in facilitating that outcome, as well as her unwavering efforts to engage with the political leaders in Kosovo.

With the formation of the coalition Government, we call on all parties to close ranks and work closely together, based on the collective responsibility to a democratic, stable and prosperous future. We also take note of the agreement between the coalition parties to establish the association of Serb municipalities within several months' time, and look forward to seeing progress on that long-contentious issue.

Malaysia fully supports the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia and welcomes the resumption of the political dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, facilitated by the European Union (EU) in Brussels, next week. Despite the stalled dialogue at the highest level, due to the delay in the formation of the Kosovo Government in the second half of last year, Malaysia is pleased to note that the EU-led dialogue has nevertheless continued at the technical level.

In December 2014, Serbia's Constitutional Court declined a request made by the Democratic Party of Serbia to review the constitutionality of the 19 April 2013 First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between Serbia and Kosovo. Given the Court's decision, Malaysia hopes that all parties in Serbia and Kosovo will remain committed to, and ensure the full implementation of, the agreements signed by their Governments under the auspices of the European Union in Brussels. Indeed, that is the only way forward towards a better common future for both Serbia and Kosovo.

Malaysia also wishes to see progress in the establishment of a specialist court, agreed to between Kosovo and the EU, to try cases arising from the findings of the EU Special Investigative Task Force last year. Progress in establishing the specialist court to try possible crimes against humanity is vital in promoting reconciliation and closure among the communities in Kosovo.

Malaysia welcomes the stable security situation in Kosovo, as reported by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif. We fully support the important role played by UNMIK to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region. We also welcome the continuing mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo to further strengthen the rule of law and the judicial institutions in Kosovo towards the path of European integration.

Based on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/74), from October 2014 to January 2015 a number of peaceful demonstrations were held in Kosovo, mainly to protest against prevailing social and economic conditions. Malaysia hopes that the new Government will take heed of the demands of its citizens for political, social and economic reform to improve their living standards.

Malaysia welcomes the ongoing cooperation among the religious communities in Kosovo, including in protecting cultural and religious heritage. Such cooperation could serve as a bridge in building confidence and trust among the religious communities in Kosovo. We strongly condemn any attempt to spread hate and instigate interreligious violence, including by desecrating cultural and religious sites.

As a multiracial and multireligious country, Malaysia has its share of difficulties and challenges in ensuring a united, stable and prosperous country. We believe that the value and practice of moderation is crucial in bridging differences, as it calls for mutual respect, acceptance and understanding among the various groups.

We also need to prevent political, social and economic marginalization in order to ensure unity and stability in a multi-ethnic society. In that regard, Malaysia stands ready to support Kosovo on its path towards nation-building, inclusive democracy, reconciliation and economic progress.

Mr. Tatham (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing today. I also welcome First Deputy Prime Ministers Dačić and Thaçi to the Security Council.

Since the Council last met in this format (see S/PV.7327), only two months ago, we have witnessed welcome progress in Kosovo. The formation of a new Government in Pristina in December, after a long gap, marks an important step forward following free and fair elections throughout the territory of Kosovo in June of last year. With the key institutions now in place, we look forward to the new Government enacting the reforms highlighted in the European Commission's annual *Kosovo Progress Report 2014*. There is much for the new Administration to take forward, including economic development and the rule of law, ensuring greater independence of the judiciary and tackling organized crime and corruption.

The formation of a new Government is also a chance to bring renewed momentum to the European Union (EU) facilitated high-level dialogue. The Governments of both Serbia and Kosovo have shown welcome commitment to that process, and we wish them every success in their first meeting of 2015, next week. I welcome the strong commitments to this process that we have just heard from First Deputy Prime Ministers Thaçi and Dačić in their statements this morning.

Continued progress at the working level will be vital. I am pleased that the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/74) notes that some progress was made in the technical-level dialogue in December. The normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia is integral to both countries' European Union accession paths.

We also welcome the new Government's commitment to establish judicial proceedings for the investigation into the allegations reported by the Special Investigative Task Force. As the Secretary-General makes clear in his report, that will be an important step forward for the new Government. We urge them to ensure that relevant laws are passed to enable that.

I join the representative of Angola in commending the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, supported by UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme, on women and peace and security, including the holding of an open day to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

We also welcome the adoption of the Kosovo action plan for implementing resolution 1325 (2000). In that context, the legislative provision made for survivors of sexual violence during the Kosovo conflict is an important step. Women and peace and security and the prevention of sexual violence are rightly important priorities of the Council, and it is heartening to see these issues being addressed in Kosovo.

While the Secretary-General's report underlines the continuing stability of the overall security situation in Kosovo, the violence in Pristina during recent protests is a matter of concern. We all support the right to peaceful protest, but Government authorities and the opposition in Pristina must do all that they can to avoid violence and escalation. It is vital that the Government and the international community in Kosovo continue to engage with the opposition to address the underlying causes of the protests, including the economic situation.

The report of the Secretary-General also prompts us to note the need for continued focus on tackling ethnically motivated incidents. We urge all political and community leaders to work towards creating greater cooperation in and between communities, tackling issues from the past and reconciliation.

Later this month, we will mark the seventh anniversary of Kosovo's declaration of independence. It is an important moment to reflect on the progress Kosovo has made. It is also a chance to recognize the progress made in the international community. Since 2008, well over half of the States Members of the United Nations have recognized Kosovo, including many of its neighbours in the Western Balkans.

Thanks to the historic agreement reached with Serbia in 2013, Kosovo now has a strong foundation for cooperation with Belgrade and for negotiations on EU membership. In addition, Kosovo has secured access to funding from the international financial institutions and will compete in the 2016 Olympic Games, having gained membership of the International Olympic Committee. We welcome that progress. It demonstrates that Kosovo's independence is irreversible. We encourage those countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to do so.

Precisely because of that level of progress, the United Kingdom reiterates its view that it is past time to adjust the frequency of these meetings to reflect the new realities on the ground. The situation does not, in our view, merit quarterly meetings. The Council must recognize and adapt to progress, particularly when there are so many genuine challenges to international peace and security confronting us. In practice, these meetings see largely predictable exchanges of well-known positions by Council members. The format tends to lead to the accentuation of differences between the two countries at a time when our shared goal should be to inject momentum into the EU-facilitated dialogue. We would like to see less talk in New York and more action in the EU-facilitated dialogue.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): I thank Special Representative Farid Zarif for his report, and welcome Deputy Prime Ministers Dačić and Thaçi to today's debate.

New Zealand believes long-term stability and security will come from an inclusive and democratic Kosovo that respects the rights and interests of all its citizens. It will come from genuine reconciliation among

its various communities and from the maintenance of constructive and cooperative relations between Pristina and Belgrade. The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2015/74) outlines the encouraging progress that continues to be made in all those respects.

While the primary responsibility for that lies with the parties themselves, the international community continues to have an important role to play in providing the necessary conditions for progress. We commend and support the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and of Special Representative Zarif in facilitating conditions for building cooperative relations between Kosovo's communities and the important ongoing role of regional partners, including the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We, the Security Council, also need to play our part in those efforts, including through support for a resumption of high-level dialogue between the parties.

New Zealand welcomes the formation in December of a new Government and the constitution of the Kosovo Assembly, which brings to an end a lengthy period of political uncertainty. The broad representation of Kosovo's communities in the new coalition Government demonstrates just how far Kosovo has come. We hope that recent security incidents will prove to be isolated events and that the inclusive nature of the Government remains unchanged.

We also welcome the announcement of the resumption of high-level talks between Kosovo and Serbia, beginning next week. The EU dialogue is an important mechanism for enabling progress, and we commend Belgrade and Pristina for their positive approach. Maintaining a positive approach will be important to ensure the full implementation and outstanding provisions of the 19 April 2013 agreement.

Long-term reconciliation between Kosovo's various communities will require the resolution of the outstanding questions concerning missing persons and further progress on displaced people and facilitating voluntary returns. We acknowledge the positive steps taken with regard to the latter and encourage attention to addressing the obstacles to returns identified in the Secretary-General's report.

We echo the Secretary-General's call for the establishment of a specialist court to try cases arising from the work of the EU Special Investigative Task Force. It is important that the court be — and is seen to be — objective and impartial.

Finally, New Zealand encourages further efforts to strengthen rule of law institutions in Kosovo, including through promoting judicial independence and measures to tackle corruption and organized crime.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing on the current situation in Kosovo. We also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, for his presence and statement. We welcome the statement made by Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

We welcome the election of the new Government of Kosovo on 9 December. We hope that the spirit of cooperation and collective responsibility that prevailed in that process persists as the Government tackles new challenges such as the economic development of Kosovo, the fight against organized crime and corruption, and the establishment of the rule of law.

Regarding the security situation, we are concerned about the news regarding recent violent events in Pristina. However, despite disturbances and tensions, we note positively that the security situation in Kosovo remained generally stable and police forces in Kosovo responded appropriately to the circumstances to restore order. In that respect, we highlight the work and the central role that UNMIK continues to play in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, which is a priority for making progress in reconciliation between communities.

We also congratulate the Kosovo authorities on their adoption of the draft law prohibiting the participation of Kosovo in foreign conflicts. We hope that those changes can be coupled with improvements in the living conditions of the citizens of Kosovo, strengthening public confidence in the democratic process and dissuading them from leaving their country to participate in foreign conflicts.

To conclude, I would like to stress that resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be in full force as the internationally accepted legal basis for resolving the situation in Kosovo, including strict respect for the principle of territorial integrity. We look forward to the conversations that will take place in Brussels on

9 February between Belgrade and Pristina, and we hope that the parties will continue to implement the agreement of 19 April 2013 to continue the process of normalizing their relations.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this Security Council briefing on Kosovo. We welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, and we note with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/74) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We also welcome the participation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and the statement made by Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates that full adherence to international law — non-intervention, respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of States, and the peaceful settlement of disputes — is critical to the maintenance of international peace and security. In calling for a peaceful solution to the question of Kosovo, Venezuela believes that resolution 1244 (1999) remains the internationally accepted legal basis applicable to this dispute, aimed at finding a general solution through political negotiation. In that regard, we call for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia to be guaranteed.

Our country supports the resumption of dialogue and negotiations between Serbia and the local authorities in the province of Kosovo, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in order to achieve a mutually acceptable solution between the parties. An important step in this direction was the establishment of the Kosovo Assembly and the establishment of a new Government in Pristina.

We note with cautious optimism that security on the administrative border of Kosovo remains stable, although certain incidents have been reported since the most recent Council meeting on this issue (S/PV.7327), held in December 2014. We appreciate the positive role played by the United Nations through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo by promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, as well as its cooperation with the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), under the auspices of the Organization.

The mediation of the European Union between Belgrade and Pristina and the transfer of functions from UNMIK to EULEX do not, in our view, undermine the work being done on the ground. We hope that such missions will continue, on the basis of their respective mandates, to play a constructive role in achieving an appropriate solution to the Kosovo issue. However, we note with concern reports that some senior officials of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo have been implicated in acts of corruption. We hope that Mr. Gabriele Meucci, in his efforts as Head of EULEX, and the independent legal expert Mr. Jean-Paul Jacqué will continue, in a fair and transparent manner, to carry out their assigned task to clarify the facts and thereby pursue their work to promote the rule of law in Kosovo. Moreover, we encourage interested parties to intensify their joint efforts in the process of clarifying the situation of missing persons, and we thank EULEX for its forensic cooperation in this matter. We also urge the speedy establishment of the specialist court to investigate allegations of crimes against humanity committed during the armed conflict.

Venezuela rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as the spread of extremism. In this regard, we note with appreciation the steps being taken in Kosovo to prevent the recruitment of persons as foreign terrorist fighters to participate in armed conflict in Syria and Iraq. However, we urge the authorities to remain highly vigilant in this matter of extreme sensitivity in terms of security.

We attach great importance to the full respect of the human rights of displaced persons and minorities, as well as to their right to return to their places of origin so that they can fully enjoy their human rights free of discrimination. However, we are concerned that incidents continue to occur against Kosovo Serb citizens in certain areas, and we therefore call for appropriate measures to be taken to remedy this situation and prevent persecution and hostility on the basis of ethnicity or religion.

We are further concerned that the sale of businesses and property in Kosovo undermines the rights of the Kosovo Serb minority and may become yet another factor impeding the return of the displaced to their homes. Illegal actions against cultural and religious heritage have given rise to serious incidents between

the two communities that hinder the process of peace and dialogue in Kosovo. We encourage both parties to work together to prevent a recurrence of such acts, which endanger peace and dialogue in the region.

Finally, we call on all parties to redouble their efforts to find a peaceful, just and lasting political solution within the framework of international law, including full compliance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Bertoux (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing and the Foreign Ministers of Kosovo, Mr. Hashim Thaçi, and Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, for their statements.

Just two months after our most recent debate in the Security Council on the situation in Kosovo (see S/PV.7327), we note the revival of the general political landscape with the formation on 9 December 2014 of a coalition Government in Pristina and the imminent resumption of political dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. The successful elections of 8 June generally met the expectations of the Council. We welcome the fact that the parties have finally been able to take responsibility for finding a solution, in accordance with the Constitution and democratic principles, to the political deadlock that prevailed between June and December. Now that the uncertainty related to the elections have lifted, we will remain particularly attentive to the rapid resumption of political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The new Heads of Government, who will meet for the first time in Brussels on Monday, should give new impetus to the process of normalization of relations between the two countries.

We encourage the parties to engage in dialogue and remind them that time is not on their side. In any political process, regular progress is needed to reflect the constantly renewed commitment of each. In this regard, we hope that the agreement on justice can be endorsed on Monday. In addition, we will continue to pay particular attention to the establishment of the association/community of Serb municipalities in northern Kosovo. It must have real teeth and should be adapted to Kosovo law. It will be a key milestone in the implementation of the Agreement of 19 April 2013.

Similarly, we expect Kosovo to take the necessary measures to establish the specialist court to follow up the work of the Special Investigative Task Force of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which is looking into allegations of the crimes committed 15 years ago. We send our best wishes to Mr. David Schwendiman, the successor of Chief Prosecutor Williamson, leading the Task Force.

We have no doubt about the willingness of Kosovars to engage in a judicial process that is essential to the fight against impunity and will address all aspects of the difficult times experienced by Kosovo in the late 1990s. We note too that progress has been made towards the the establishment of competent criminal courts. In that respect, we again count on the commitment of the political parties in Pristina to taking this process to its conclusion and to fighting generally in favour of strengthening the rule of law. It is in the light of progress in these two areas in particular that the Council will be able to assess the positive evolution of the situation in Kosovo.

Today, I want to return to the situation of the Kosovars, who are increasingly choosing exile in the face of the difficulties they are encountering in their daily lives, in particular employment-related economic problems. The entire Kosovar political class must heed those who are voting with their feet, and fight the organized crime networks that contribute to the growth of illegal immigration. The viability of Kosovar society and the stability of the Balkans and the European Union are at stake. We will remain vigilant vis-á-vis the general living conditions of the populations in Kosovo, and encourage the parties to ensure respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities. Restoring a relationship of trust between communities remains the only way to allow Kosovo and Serbia to open a new page in their history. In that regard, demonstrations cannot be allowed to degenerate into violent confrontations, and all extremist rhetoric must be banished from the public forum.

I conclude by commending the joint march of Kosovo and Serbia towards the European Union. Important steps have been taken in that direction. Serbia has made substantial institutional changes, and we welcome its achievements. The technical negotiation process for accession to the European Union, formally launched on 21 January 2014, continues. We now hope that the efforts of Serbia will be recognized and that a first negotiation chapter can be opened soon.

The European Commission has welcomed the commitment of Pristina to concluding its stabilization and association agreement. We hope that the agreement will be finalized very soon. It is important that the progress made by both parties proceed at the same

pace so as to prevent any delay in one from slowing the progress of the other. We express the hope that Serbia and Kosovo have again moved a little closer to their common future.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo, whom I thank for their statements.

First of all, we congratulate Kosovo on having formed its Government, which we hope will fulfil the aspirations of the people of Kosovo. Achieving the promise of its policies and overcoming the problems that existed in the course of setting up the current Government require greater efforts from the authorities and genuine, responsible actions to improve the political atmosphere prevailing in Kosovo. Stabilizing the political environment will contribute to a stronger State, leading to the economic and social development that the citizens of Kosovo deserve.

Good-neighbourly relations and respect for sovereignty and the individual characteristics of each State by the other countries of the region are the most important elements in ensuring stability and prosperity for the Balkans in general. We therefore call on the two neighbours —Serbia and Kosovo — to continue with the full implementation of the agreements reached bilaterally, including the Brussels Agreement. We also call for strengthened cooperation in all areas. We welcome the announcement of next week's resumption of the high-level dialogue sponsored by the European Union. We hope that the meetings will be successful and lead to the full normalization of bilateral relations between the two States.

Jordan welcome's Kosovo's adoption of a law to criminalize participation in foreign conflicts. This will contribute to improving the domestic security situation in Kosovo and help preserve stability in the region.

The progress and positive steps taken by Kosovo on all fronts in general, and specifically on the rule of law and human rights, are a testament to the will of the people of Kosovo to consolidate the institutions of a modern State, thereby proving to the world that they are able to live up to their responsibilities. All of those efforts strengthen that stature of Kosovo on the international level.

In that connection, one of the most important features of a modern secular State is its ability to treat all citizens equally and without discrimination. We therefore encourage the authorities in Kosovo to step up their efforts, in particular in the areas of modernizing the legislative system with regard to autonomy for minorities so as to ensure their rights, thereby strengthening efforts at reconciliation among all members of society. Minorities must be protected from all attacks and against any attacks on their religious, cultural and historical institutions or property.

Jordan reiterates its call for strengthened relations between Kosovo and the international community, including facilitating its accession to various international organizations. Efforts must be made to not hinder Kosovo's accession to such bodies. We also reiterate our support for extending the reporting period of the reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of UNMIK, given the stability of the situation in Kosovo.

We emphasize the importance of the activities carried out by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which is helping the country to modernize and build the State. We express our gratitude to UNMIK's leadership and staff for their efforts to discharge their mandate, which throughout the years has led to an improvement of the situation in all areas.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his briefing. We welcome Foreign Ministers Thaçi and Dačić back to the Security Council.

I commend both countries for their continued dedication to the normalization of relations. We particularly welcome Kosovo's continuing integration into the community of States, as demonstrated by its participation in regional meetings and forums in recent months. Specifically, we congratulate Kosovo on its recognition by the International Olympic Committee, and look forward to seeing Kosovo's athletes competing under the Kosovo flag in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

The United States welcomes the successful formation of a Government in Kosovo in December 2014. Although the process took time, it represents the first democratic transition of political authority resulting from free and fair elections across the entirety of Kosovo's territory. This coalition Government and

the process that led to its formation demonstrated the resilience and vitality of Kosovo's democratic and political institutions. The United States appreciates the leadership of President Jahjaga in helping to facilitate the political dialogue that led to the formation of the Government in accordance with Kosovo's Constitution.

The new Government, which includes representatives of minority communities, has been tested over the past month by violent protests and by the separation from Government service yesterday of the Minister for Communities and Returns. The importance of a fully representative, fully participatory and multi-ethnic Government and Parliament cannot be understated.

With respect to the protests, let us be clear: all citizens have the democratic right to protest, but violence is illegal and unacceptable. We condemn all acts of vandalism to public and private property, and the intimidation of journalists and television crews. All citizens of Kosovo should exercise their democratic rights, and they should do so legally and responsibility.

We encourage the new Government to move quickly to address the socioeconomic challenges in the country. Economic growth and new employment opportunities will demonstrate to the citizens of Kosovo, regardless of ethnicity, that they have a prosperous and free future at home, thereby stemming the tide of migration out of the country. Additionally, we encourage efforts by Kosovo to undertake the measures necessary to encourage the return of those displaced, both internally and outside of Kosovo, as a result of the conflict, including by adjudicating property claims and enforcing court decisions.

We will continue to urge Serbia, Kosovo and all States in the region to increase cooperation at their shared borders. Such cooperation will advance the rule of law, increase security and counter criminal activity, including smuggling and trafficking in persons.

We again condemn the actions of those who seek to oppose the work of building inclusive democracy in Kosovo by committing acts of violence of by sowing tension, mistrust and fear among communities. The use of violence against religious pilgrims, as we unfortunately saw in Gjakova/Đakovica on Orthodox Christmas, is clearly unacceptable. All sides must guarantee the freedom of movement for local populations. To that end, the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo continue to exercise indispensable roles in facilitating a safe and secure environment.

The United States notes the visit of Prime Minister Vučić to Kosovo in January, and the cooperation of Kosovo authorities to provide protection. That act was another step towards the normalization of relations. The European Union-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the implementation of the April 2013 Agreement continue to be critical elements of building a strong, inclusive and multi-ethnic democracy in Kosovo. We welcome next week's high-level meetings in Brussels and we hope that the session on Monday will lead to concrete progress that will directly benefit the citizens of both countries.

The United States commends Serbia and Kosovo as well for their work in combating foreign terrorist fighters, as demonstrated by their attendance at the first ministerial-level plenary session of the counter-Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant coalition, held in Brussels in December. Kosovo's dedication to that effort is also apparent in the recent work to arrest and prosecute foreign terrorist fighters in Kosovo and by the introduction of a law to criminalize participation in such activity.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that, while the United States believes that the situation in Kosovo remains an important issue and and there is much work to be done to advance the dialogue, there is important work to be done to discuss issues critical for long-term stability, reconciliation and development in the region. There is little, however, that such regular briefings contribute to those issues. We reiterate our preference that the Council extend the reporting period for the Secretary-General to every six months.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif for his briefing on the recent developments in Kosovo. I also acknowledge the presence of His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo.

Nigeria notes the Constitution of the Assembly of Kosovo and the formation of a new coalition Government in Pristina. The Government's inclusive nature is a sign of progress in the implementation of the normalization Agreement. With the Government and Parliament in place, Kosovo's leaders now have the

institutional framework to continue with the political and economic reforms that were stalled by months of political stalemate.

Nigeria acknowledges the efforts of the Kosovo authorities to prevent their citizens from becoming foreign terrorist fighters. The approval of the draft law on the prohibition of joining armed conflicts outside State territory is a significant step in that direction. It is our hope that this legislation, which penalizes the recruitment and participation of Kosovars in foreign armed conflict, will be effective in dissuading potential recruits. Preventing extremism, however, is not a task for the authorities alone. That is why we commend Kosovar religious leaders for their efforts at reaching out to Kosovar youths with a message that discourages extremism and radicalization.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons represents an ongoing security challenge for Kosovo, as it does in our region. The situation calls for strengthened measures to control the illicit flow of such weapons. The legislative framework developed by the authorities for weapons regulation and control is a step in the right direction. That led to the removal of over 1,500 fire arms from circulation in 2014. Nigeria commends the authorities for that achievement and encourages them to intensify their efforts.

In order to achieve lasting reconciliation in the region, it is essential that residual issues awaiting attention by the authorities be promptly addressed. To that end, the Parliament should take urgent steps to enact the legislative and constitutional changes required for the efficient functioning of the specialist court on post-war atrocity crimes. Similarly, it is important that a transparent and credible judicial process be put in place to adjudicate the allegations in the Dick Marty report. That would facilitate a broad public understanding and help to build consensus around the adjudication process. Likewise, the disposal of assets and the privatization of corporations should be guided by extant laws and regulations and be conducted in a transparent, impartial and credible manner.

The role of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo remains vital to the promotion of security and stability in Kosovo. We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team for the efforts they are putting into the fulfilment of their mandate.

Mrs. Jakubonė (Lithuania): I welcome to the Council Deputy Prime Ministers Ivica Dacic of Serbia and Hashim Thaci of Kosovo, and I thank them for their statements. I also thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative and the Head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing.

Over the past few years, positive developments in the region have been hard to miss. A new Government of Kosovo was formed through dialogue and democratic processes. We welcome its strong commitment to build a democratic, peaceful, prosperous and multi-ethnic Kosovo. We call for cooperation and collective responsibility further to prevail when resolving numerous open issues in the country, notably in the light of recent protests on the ground. The new Government and the Assembly need to build on the Kosovo's reform agenda, strengthen the rule of law, including judicial independence, and fight against organized crime and corruption. We call to complete the necessary steps concerning the establishment of the specialist court to try cases stemming from the findings of the European Union Special Investigative Task Force without further delay.

Lithuania remains a staunch supporter of Kosovo's European aspirations. We look forward to the finalization of the atabilization and association agreement between the European Union (EU) and Kosovo and encourage making progress on the visa liberalization dialogue. We also commend the Kosovo Government on the recent adoption of the action plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the European Commission progress report.

Next week, the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is to take place in Brussels. We welcome the commitment of both parties to continue seeking progress on their way in the normalization process. We encourage both sides and their leaders to show the decisiveness necessary for the common European future and to engage actively in further implementation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, signed on 19 April 2013, translating the Agreement into results on the ground and building trust among the communities.

We reiterate our support for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). We note its important role on the ground in the fight against organized crime and corruption, the prosecution of war crimes and the fight against impunity. Again, my

delegation wishes to remind the Council that over a year ago Audrius Šenavičius, a Lithuanian officer serving in EULEX, was killed while on duty in northern Kosovo. We ask the competent authorities to provide information on the progress of the investigation.

We commend the solidarity Kosovo authorities have demonstrated in the fight against terrorism. We welcome the adoption by the Kosovo Assembly of the law on the prohibition of joining the armed conflicts outside State territory.

Finally, I wish to reiterate our view that debating the UNMIK report twice times a year, instead of quarterly, would be a reasonable step forward to acknowledge the progress in the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina and the stability in Kosovo.

Mr. President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zarif, for his briefing. I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, for his presence and statement today. I also listened attentively to the statement by Mr. Thaçi. China respects Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and understands its legitimate concerns over the question of Kosovo.

Resolution 1244 (1999) represents an important legal basis for the resolution of the Kosovo question. China has always maintained that it is imperative to follow the policies and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions to carry out dialogue and negotiations to reach a proper settlement that is acceptable to the parties concerned. China appreciates Serbia's active effort in search of a political settlement of the Kosovo question and welcomes and supports the continuation of pragmatic and constructive dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina to implement the agreements already reached by the two sides on energy and the exchange of personnel. Thanks to the joint efforts of the various parties, the security situation in Kosovo is generally stable. We encourage the two sides to continue to push ahead with the dialogue process and to seek a lasting solution of the Kosovo question in order to safeguard the security and stability in the Balkans and Europe region at large.

China appreciates the work undertaken by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif, and supports UNMIK in continuing to implement its Security Council mandate. We hope that the international presence, including UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, will step up its coordination and play a positive and constructive role in promoting an appropriate settlement of the Kosovo issue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.